excess tobacco produced by the registered growers was Rs. 2/- per kilogram plus 5% service charges. This marked an increase from the penalty imposed of Rs. *21*- per kilogram plus 5% service charges levied on the unauthorised tobacco produced both by the unregistered as well as the registered growers of Karnataka since 1998-99. Similarly, the penalty imposed on the unauthorised FC V tobacco produced by the growers of Andhra Pradesh from 1998-1999 to 2000-2001 was Rs. *21*- per kilogram plus 5% service charges. Subsequently, for the 2001-2002 season, the tobacco Board allowed only Minimum Support Price for the unauthorised FCV tobacco. The details of the penalty collected over the past four years is as follows:

Year	Andhra Pradesh (Rs.)	Karnataka (Rs.)
1998-1999	12,59,37,932	5,37,54,012
1999-2000	11,05,89,394	5,01,32,895
2000-2001	5,93,08,121.40*	.7,72,73,460
2001-2002	Auctions in progress	13,26,32,395

* This amount has been kept in a separate account since the matter is *subjudice.*

(c) and (d) The Government of Karnataka had requested that the penalty be reduced in the interest of the growers. Accordingly, Government of India took the decision to reduce the penalty from Rs. *21*- per kilogram plus 20% service charges to Rs. *21*- per kilogram plus 15% service charges on the unauthorised FCV tobacco produced by the unregistered growers. The penalty on the excess crop produced by the registered growers remained unchanged at Rs. *21*- per kilogram plus 5% service charges.

Impact of removal of QRs on export-import

4988. SHRIK. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have reviewed the influence of removal of quantitative restrictions on imports and exports;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) to what extent it has increased the overall efficiency of the economy?

THE MrNISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) to (c) Import restrictions are being removed as part of economic liberalization programme of the Government and also in terms of our international obligations. At present, all the items on which import restrictions

were maintained on account of balance of payment reasons are freely importable. The removal of restrictions has not altered the overall rate of growth of imports of the country. The import growth rate during the year 2000-2001 was only 7.27% in rupee terms and 0.27% in US dollar terms. The growth rate of imports during the first nine months of financial year 2001 -2002 was only 0.31 % in Dollar terms and 4.55% in Rupees terms, compared to the same period for the previous year. The import data for 714 items, QRs on which were removed on 31.03.2000, for the year 2000-2001, indicates a growth in import of these items by less than 6%. Similarly, the import of 300 sensitive items, which is being monitored by a Standing Group of Secretaries, has also not indicated any surge in imports in the first nine months of financial year 2001 -2002. The overall picture that emerges is thus one of normal trading activity in response to demand and supply factors. However, imports are constantly being monitored and the Government is determined to ensure, through appropriate use of tariff and other mechanisms, **that** imports do not cause any serious detriment or injury to the domestic producers. The economic liberalization programme being followed by the country is aimed at, *inter alia,* enhancing the efficiency of resource utilization and productive use of resources. As an indicator thereof, it may be seen that during the period from 1990-91 to 2001-2002, India's exports have grown fromUSS 17998.00 million to US$ 43998.53 million, an increase of 144% *i.e.* approximately 2.5 times.

In order to boost agricultural exports, quantitative restrictions on export of wheat and its products, butter, grain and flour of barley, Maize, Bajra, Ragi and Jowar have been removed. Export restrictions like registration requirements on Butter, Wheat and Wheat products, Coarse Grains, Cashew to Russia and packaging requirements on groundnut oil and pulses have also been removed. Restrictions on export of all cultivated (other than wild) varieties of seed, except Jute and Onion have been removed.

Closure of Asbestos manufacturing units

4989. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to shut down Asbestos Sheet manufacturing units in India as it can cause lung cancer to the workers exposed to it;

(b) if so, by when manufacturing of Asbestos Sheet is likely to be closed keeping in view the fact that it is already banned in most of the developed countries; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?